

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 01846 021618Z

45

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 PPT-02

AID-20 IGA-02 DRC-01 EUR-25 /134 W

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O R 021550Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2668

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1846

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPRS, PINT, GT

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF MARYKNOLL PRIESTS

REF: GUATEMALA 1781

1. FATHERS PRICE AND TOWLE WHO ARE UNDER EXPULSION ORDER BY GOG, ACCOMPANIED BY MARYKNOLL REGIONAL SUPERIOR BREEN, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR AFTERNOON APRIL 1 TO INFORM HIM THAT EARLIER THAT AFTERNOON IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR LEMUS HAD CALLED THEM TO HIS OFFICE AND GIVEN THEM FINAL DEADLINE OF TWO DAYS TO LEAVE COUNTRY--A FACT THAT WAS THEN NOTED IN THEIR PASSPORTS. INASMUCH AS IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT VICE PRESIDENT CACERES WAS STILL REVIEWING CASE, AMBASSADOR AND BREEN AGREED THAT BEST COURSE FOR PRIESTS TO FOLLOW WAS TO SEND MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY TO VICE PRESIDENT THANKING HIM FOR HAVING RECEIVED BREEN LAST WEEK AND POINTING OUT THAT DESPITE FACT THAT BREEN HAD SENT TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT ASKING THAT EXPULSION ORDER NOT BE EXECUTED UNTIL CACERES HAD HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS BREEN INTERVIEW WITH HIM AND THAT PRESIDENT
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 01846 021618Z

HAD ACKNOWLEDGED RECEIPT OF MESSAGE, LEMUS HAD NOW

GIVEN THEM FINAL DEADLINE TO DEPART. (THIS IN HOPE THAT CACERES MIGHT CLARIFY MATTER AND THAT FINAL DEPARTURE ORDER WAS RESULT OF CONFUSION). BREEN DELIVERED MESSAGE TO CACERES' OFFICE LATER AFTERNOON APRIL 1.

2. SUBSEQUENTLY PRIESTS CALLED AT HOME OF DCM APPROXIMATELY 7:00 P.M. THAT EVENING TO REPORT THAT CACERES HAD CALLED MARYKNOLL HOUSE PERSONALLY TO SAY THAT NOTHING MORE COULD BE DONE FOR THE PRIESTS, THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE (ALTHOUGH AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, MARYKNOLLER FOX AND THE GERMAN PRIEST COULD STAY) AND THAT THIS WAS FINAL WORD DIRECTLY FROM THE PRESIDENT. BREEN SECURED RESERVATIONS FOR TOWLE AND PRICE TO DEPART FOR MIAMI VIA AVIATECA MORNING OF APRIL 3, WITHIN THE TWO DAY DEADLINE.

3. IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR LEMUS LATER THE SAME EVENING, APRIL 1, CALLED MARYKNOLL HOUSE TO SAY THAT THE TWO PRIESTS WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE GUATEMALA BEFORE 4:00 P.M., APRIL 2 OR THEY WOULD BE ARRESTED-- A THREAT ENTIRELY INCONSISTENT WITH TWO-DAY DEADLINE HE HAD ESTABLISHED.

4. EARLY MORNING APRIL 2, DCM MANAGED CONTACT LEMUS, POINT OUT THE INCONSISTENCY IN HIS LAST ORDER, INFORM HIM PRIESTS HAD RESERVATIONS FOR MORNING OF APRIL 3, WHICH WAS WITHIN DEADLINE NOTED IN THEIR PASSPORTS, AND STRESSED THE FURTHER COMPLICATIONS THAT WOULD ENSUE IF PRIESTS SHOULD BE ARRESTED. LEMUS SAID THAT HE HAD REDUCED DEADLINE BECAUSE PRESIDENT WAS UPSET OVER FACT PRIESTS STILL IN COUNTRY, BUT CONCEDED THAT IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT FOR THEM TO LEAVE MORNING OF APRIL 3. HE PROMISED THEY WOULD NOT BE ARRESTED OR MOLESTED PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE.

5. WHEN WE INFORMED FATHER BREEN OF THIS TALK WITH LEMUS HE THANKED US FOR EMBASSY'S ASSISTANCE BUT SAID THAT TWO PRIESTS IN QUESTION WERE SO FED UP WITH THE WHOLE SITUATION THEY WANTED TO DEPART AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GUATEM 01846 021618Z

AND HAD NOW MADE RESERVATIONS ON PAN AM FLIGHT 542 DEPARTING AT 11:00 THIS MORNING (APRIL 2), BOUND FOR NEW YORK.

6. COMMENT: HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOG HAVE REMAINED ADAMANT IN THEIR DETERMINATION OUST THE PRIESTS WITHOUT SPECIFYING CHARGES AGAINST THEM DESPITE PRESSURES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AND DESPITE

AMBASSADOR HAVING CLEARLY POINTED
OUT TO FOREIGN MINISTER THE COMPLICATIONS SUCH
ACTION, WITHOUT A HEARING, COULD CAUSE WITH
REGARD TO REACTION IN U.S. AND TO GUATEMALAN IMAGE
ABROAD. PERHAPS THE DIE WAS ACTUALLY CAST EARLY IN
GAME WHEN THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS PUBLISHED THEIR
LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT ASKING FOR A REVERSAL OF HIS
STAND AND HE PUBLISHED HIS NEGATIVE RESPONSE, MAKING
IT HARD (IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE IN HIS OWN MIND) FOR HIM TO
BACK DOWN. BREEN'S NEXT CONCERN WILL BE TO INDUCE
GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR TO LIFT BAN ON ENTRY OF
MARYKNOLL PRIESTS WHO DO NOT ALREADY HAVE RESIDENCY
PERMITS, ALTHOUGH AT THIS POINT HE HAS NO INTENTION
OF TRYING TO GET TOWLE OR PRICE INTO SALVADOR.
MELOY

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